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ABSTRACT

An analysis of the trend in teaching African languages as a second or foreign language (AFL2) looks at patterns in the objectives of AFL2, teachers and learners, and instructional environments. Three basic program objectives in AFL2 are distinguished: language proficiency (basic conversation); language competence (close to native skills); and knowledge for linguistic analysis. Four types of language teacher-learner combinations are identified: native-speaking teachers qualified in language teaching who have a common language with the learners, adequate for teaching and learning; native-speaking qualified teachers with a common language not adequate for teaching and learning; unqualified, non-native-speaking teachers who have a common language with learners, adequate for teaching and learning; and unqualified, native-speaking teachers without training in the language or linguistics, and learners. Four locations of instruction are noted: in the learner's home country; and three areas outside the learner's home country (Europe; America; and Asia). Implications for AFL2 of these variations are discussed. An ongoing project in Japan in which Yoruba is taught as a second language by two different methods (bilingual and direct/monolingual) is described, and issues arising within this context are examined. Suggestions are made for advancing AFL2. Contains 13 references. (MSE)

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CATEGORIES IN AFL2 AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PEDAGOGY

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This paper, in three parts, will attempt a categorisation of the trend in the teaching of the African languages as a foriegn language or as a second language (here-in-after referred to as AFL2) using the criteria of objectives, theatre of action and the teacher-learner, for the purpose. It will make a brief report on an on-going research experiment on the use of two methods of teaching AFL2 at Osaka University of Foreign Studies, Japan and will close by making suggestions to centres running AFL2 programmes world-wide in order to enhance the quality of the programmes and streamline the factors or elements involved in AFL2 teaching. While the cases cited in this paper are for Yoruba as second language (YL2), we think they are representative of the situation in all other AFL2, perhaps with little differences.

The trend in the teaching of the AFL2 is such that it makes for different categories and interests. Starting from the situations observed in the YL2, one can make a list of varieties of approach as to the logistics, methodologies and strategies employed in the enterprise. For the purpose of this paper, I have identified some criteria which I used to categorise[1] the situation in the case of YL2. As stated above, these criteria are: objectives of AFL2, teacher-learner involved in AFL2 and the place of operation of AFL2. A brief explanation of the criteria will be in order.

1. Objectives-basesd criterion

This criterion has to do with what the programme of the YL2 has as its end in view. That is, what the sponsor[2] and the subjects[3] of the YL2 hope to achieve at the end of the programme. So far, I have been able to identify some three categories using this criterion. There may be many more, but for the purpose of this paper, I will narrow down to the three and later narrow down further to what I consider the ideal objective, and it is on this that I shall base my recommendations or suggestions at the end of the paper. The categories are:

a) Proficiency

b) Competence

c) Academic

In the case of (a), the objective of the programme is for the subjects to be able to speak the target language in just a functional way. It aims at a level that will equip the subject with only the simple basic forms of day-to-day conversation in the language. The aim does not extend to serious study of the language per se. And according to Barber (1985:v), the 'aim is to get the students talking in Yoruba'. Thus she is modest to state that her book is based on dialogue and that it is not intended to be used as a reader but as a vehicle to stimulate the learner to speak the language. The same is also true of such publications like Nwolise et al (1979), Schleicher (1993), the former, primarily designed for the teaching of the National Youth Service Corps members in Nigeria, during the four week orientation course at the beginning of every N.Y.S.C. year. Judging by the time available for the teaching in this type of situation, the best one hopes the learners of the language can achieve cannot be anything more than something near what one can call proficiency level.

The objective in (b) is that in which the performance of the subject at the end of the programme is expected to be relatively like that of the native speaker or very close to it. It is aimed at making the learner to be able to express his thoughts correctly and efficiently in the L2. As one should expect, the time, contents and the participants (e.g. the teacher) of the programme for such an objective to be achieved have to be carefully and properly prepared and managed. The designing and implementation have to be handled, controlled by experts or a standing related association competent to do so. And perhaps it may require a policy backing so that nothing in the programme is done on any ad hoc basis.

In the case of (c), it is usually the practice at the university level in the department or centres running Linguistics courses to require the students to be exposed to the analysis of a language other than their mother tongue.

The subjects of this type of programme are thus provided with data on the L2 to justify or illustrate linguistic claims. Thus when YL2 is the target language in this type of programme, the subjects are neither proficient or competent in the language. They only have what can be referred to as the 'linguist's examples' in their data from the L2. This is a common practice among many folk etymologists and anthropologists.[4] However, a little different in this category is the objective of a publication like Rowland (1969) which straddles between competence and academic. While this publication introduces the contents to the learner 'step by step in the best academic tradition', I do not feel it can achieve the level of communicative competence which I believe as the ideal for the purpose of this paper.

2. Teacher-Learner criterion

Categories identified under this criterion are based on the consideration of the teacher-learner in the YL2 situation. In it, we consider the preparation of the active participants i.e. the teacher and the learner in the pedagogical process. The categories identified here are:

(a) Qualified YL2 teacher (who is a native speaker) and learners who have a common language e.g. English / French between them with varying degree of competence in the common language but adequate for teaching and learning purposes. In this case, we are thinking of the teacher who has training in the language, or who has teacher training education in the language, and who is a native speaker.[5] This category can be found in the U.S. and Europe, especially in the universities or centres where there are departments / centres for African languages and literatures / African Studies programmes.

(b) Qualified (native speaker) YL2 teacher and learners in which there is a common language e.g. English between them with varying degree of competence but not adequate for teaching and learning process. This

category can be found in places lake Japan (may be Russia or China). The inadequacy in the common language here refers to the student's or learner's case.

(c) Qualified YL2 teacher (who is not a native speaker) and learners who have a common language between them which is adequate for teaching and learning process. We are referring to a situation whereby a native speaker of English, French or Japanese (who was and probably continues to be YL2 learner) teaches students who speak English, French, Japanese speaking students respectively. This category can be found in U.S., Europe and Japan.

(d) Another category recognised is that in which we have Unqualified YL2 teacher (those who have no training in the language or linguistics) and learners. In this category, the teacher is allowed to teach the students just because he is a native speaker of the language. There may be or may not be a common language between the teacher and the learner, competence in which one can consider as adequate for teaching and learning purposes. The important point we want to be noted here is that the only consideration for the teacher here is based on the wrong assumption that any native speaker of a language should be able to teach such a language. Here, we are not referring to the situation where any native speaker is used as an informant in the language study but not as a teacher. While the former is an acceptable practice, the latter is not acceptable as it is capable of creating many problems.

3. Place of Operation of YL2

As we noted earlier, this can also be called the zonal categories considering the location where the YL2 enterprise is being undertaken. The categories here are two viz. Home-based and Outside-based categories ——

the latter being sub-categorised into three.

a) Home-based category

As required by the Nigerian language policy, for instance, one of the three major languages viz. Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba is to be taught and offered by students at the Junior Secondary School level as NL2. That is, a student is required to study one of the three major languages other than his/her mother tongue. This enterprise, since it is being undertaken in the home country of the language, we call it Home-based category.

b) Outside-based category

This is subcategorised into three depending on the zone in which the YL2 is offered.

i) Europe-based category.

We identify this as a category judging it by the long standing tradition of contact between AFL and Europe. The study of the African language has been of interest for a long time in Europe and has led to the establishment of centres for African studies like School of Oriental and African Studies, London and others in France and Germany. While the interest in the AFL was created for different reasons like evangelism, governance and commerce, the political factor was very prominent since the AFL is one of the languages of the colonies of the European countries.

ii) America-based category

We have identified this as a separate category because of the difference in style, approach and interest in AFL in this zone. Although the English language makes this category dove-tail into (bi) above, the difference in the fact of a longer period of contact and the fact of colonial factor involved in (bi) on AFL justifies its recognition as a category.

ā) Asia-based category

In temporal terms, this is a later development and it is identified by considering the difference in interest and relationship between AFL and (2bi) and (2bī) on the one hand and (2bā) on the other. This category is found in Japan.

Against the background of the various categories in AFL2 identified above therefore, it is clear that there is the need for a thorough consideration of all of them. The situation in the AFL2 is that which can be appropriately described as a case of absolute free trade. It ranges from the very serious enterprise to the not serious one. It allows for various contents and schemes. In the case of the teacher, there is no quality control and the methodologies as to the medium of instruction used vary from situation to situation. Barber, p.v-ń. Schleicher, p.ü-xiv. However, in our own opinion, and for the purposes of this paper, we think that the ideal in the AFL2 is the most desirable. This brings us to what we referred to earlier as objective-based criterion. Thus we feel that communicative competence in the AFL2 should be the ultimate aim and of course, when achieved by the L2 learner, the performance in the academic analysis will be more enhanced.

Hymes (1972) broadens the Chomskyan definition of the concept of the linguistic competence by showing that the native speaker's competence transcends the competence in only the grammaticality of the language. He shows that competence involves communicative competence in the acceptability of a given well-formed linguistic construction in a given social context. Following Hymes (1972) therefore, the following broad domains of skill that make up a person's communicative competence and which are necessary in the teaching of L2 and by implication here AFL2, must be recognised. These are that:

i) The learner should be able to attain as high a degree as possible of linguistic competence which will make him develop the skill in

manipulating the linguistic systems and patterns that he has learnt in the L2 to the point where he can use them intuitively and with resourcefulness. He should be able to reach the level where he can generate novel and acceptable sentences in the language to express his thoughts clearly and effectively in different situations of the language use.

ii) The learner should be able to see and differentiate between the forms which he had learnt as part of his linguistic competence and the communicative functions that they perform. He should be able to integrate the linguistic system and the linguistic system and the communicative system.

iii) The learner should be aware of the social and cultural factor involved in language forms especially when it comes to culturaly loaded words like the metaphor, idiom and other society-bound phrases. This will prevent him from making sentences or phrases that may be socially offensive.[6]

To be able to achieve the above skills, at least to a good standard, there is a lot of implication for pedagogy in the L2. This involves the control and good management of the contents or curriculum designing, entry behaviour of learners, the teachers to be involved, the temporal factor and the method of teaching the AFL2. Of all the above, the method of teaching the AFL2 is considered in this paper because we believe that it is the point where the teacher and the learner come into contact. The argument here is that the choice of the correct method of teaching can to a good extent make for any limitations in the other factors.

From the available texts used for YL2, as far as we know, there are two methods of teaching. The two are the bilingual method and the direct method. In the case of the former, another language is used to teach YL2, for example,

English language in Nigeria, Europe, America and Japan. Thus we have many texts which use the English language and the teacher uses the language in the class to teach YL2.

The problems that can be encountered in this method are many. Firstly, it can create double obstacles for the learner who does not understand the language of instruction or whose level of understanding of the medium is very limited as in the case in the zones where the English language is also L2. For instance in Japan, the learner has to always accompany himself with English-Japanese, English-Yoruba and possibly Yoruba-English dictionaries. Even in zones where the competence of the learner is adequate in the medium of instruction, he has to keep English-Yoruba and Yoruba-English dictionaries with him while studying. The disadvantages of this are obvious. It makes for slow learning and brings boredom. It also encourages dictionary-based learning which does not lead to the ideal goal of communicative competence. As it is generally known, dictionary meanings are only basic and may not satisfy the necessary ingredient for social requirements to achieve communicative competence. Of course, the fact remains that no two languages can behave identically. Even when the structural patterns look the same, socially, they will behave differently. Therefore, the process of looking for a type of one-to-one equivalents in two languages as if engaged in a jig-saw puzzle game cannot yield very good results in foreign language learning.

This method also creates the problem of cross-cultural thoughts procedure. In the case of the Japanese learner for example, it is in the form of Japanese-English-Yoruba and Yoruba-English-Japanese. Therefore, there is always the problem with idioms, metaphors and other figures of speech which may not pass through the three level thoughts procedure conveniently.

Again, in the other zones outside England and U.S., when the bilingual method is used, it can be counter-productive. The possibility is that a paradox is created in the teaching of AFL2 in which the medium of instruction is promoted even more than the target L2. And the fears expressed by linguistic

experts in the recently concluded annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science held in Atlanta, Georgia, U.S. that most of world languages are facing extinction by the end of the next century can be helped further inadvertently to fruition by the indirect bilingual method of teaching the AFL2.[7] It is such that when learning the AFL2, the learner may be learning the language of instruction, being, may be, one of what is referred to as 'dominant' or 'preferred' languages of the world.

The direct method or monoligual method is that in which the target language, the AFL2 is also the medium of instruction* and in which the text used for teaching is written. In an experiment I am undertaking at Osaka with two classes (one with bilingual method and the other monolingual method), I get to observe the following:

1. that the direct method / monolingual class shows more creativity in generating new YL2 sentences than the indirect class.
2. that the direct class performs better orally

and

3. in the post-teaching tests, the direct method class perfoms better,

even though they have the same scheme of work, same number of contact hours, same entry behaviour, the same teacher (i.e. myself), same motivation and the same tests. I am not by any means here already giving a verdict but the preliminary observations after one year indicate that the direct method might work better and achieve better results. It is an on-going research experiment and I hope I may have an opportunity to report the final findings this time next year. However, one fact is clear — if the AFL2 is taught by direct method, it will make it possible for a text to be used for such AFL2 in any part of the globe. The need to prepare separate YL2 texts for Japanese, Russian learners (who do not understand English / French may be) will no longer arise. It will also help the language to develop more terminologies.

Suggestions

Therefore, to achieve the communicative competence level that we envisage, and the possible development of a universal text, we believe that the first step is to professionalise the teaching of AFL2. In this regard, the universities and institutions involved in the teaching of AFL2, and especially in those whose programmes have reached the major status like in Florida, Wisconsin, Indiana etc., I think it is time to start off a programme on teaching of AFL2. This suggestion will lead to a cross-fertilisation of ideas and the harnessing of the human and other material resources available in the U.S. and Europe in this endeavour will be possible. Certainly, it will be of immense advantage to both the teachers and students of AFL2 and the academic world at large.

Another suggestion is the founding of an umbrella association that can check that the curriculum, facilities, teachers' qualifications meet some required standard. This suggestion is similar to what obtains in Japan for Japanese as L2 — The Association for the Promotion of Japanese Language Education.

The implication of the above is that for such AFL2 programmes, the Association can streamline their course contents. One is not advocating for the adoption of a stereotyped course outline to be rigidly followed in all the institutions that offer AFL2, but a possible guide curriculum. The individual institution may place emphasis on whatever component or aspect of the curriculum in their schemes but the basic components as designed by the Association will be entrenched in the various AFL2 programmes of the institutions involved in the enterprise. And of course, the Association should be able to motivate the writing and publication of texts for teaching the AFL2 in a method thought better or best and which can be of universal applicability.

NOTES

1. We are aware here, of course, of the problem of overgeneration of categories that is possible in this approach.

2. For instance, in Nigeria, the language policy has proficiency in the NL2 as its objective in order to foster unity when a Nigerian is proficient in at least one of the three major languages other than his mother-tongue. The NERDC has published a number of texts in this regard and one of such is the Quadrilingual Glossary of Legislative Terms in English, Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba.

3. While I was teaching proficiency class in Yoruba at the University of Ibadan, 1978-83, my class was composed of the members of an association of American or European women married to Yoruba men. The association is called 'Niger Wives'. The objective of the members according to them is to understand Yoruba culture and value system through the language.

4. For example of scholars in this category, see Oduyoye, M. 1968.

5. The Nigerian case is taken for granted here.

6. L2 learners always make mistakes when using a foreign language by apparent structural or dictionary equivalents in their own language and make them produce socially offensive forms in the foreign language. For instance, among the Japanese speakers of English, it is common to hear the phrase 'of course', in answer to a question that requires Yes or No, which suggests that the question asked is silly as the answer is quite obvious.

7. The Daily Yomiuri, Feb. 26, 1995 p. 11(A). Michael Krauss pointed out at the

meeting that pressures leading to language extinction stem from encroachment on the territories of indigenous peoples, mass migration and the desire to learn the dominant languages of the world, notably English.

8. Ọlabọde, et al (forthcoming) adopts this method. We also had the privilege to know of Awobuluyi (forthcoming) Macmillan Pub. Nig. Plc. and Ajuwọn, B and Olowookere (forthcoming) with U.P.L. The infomation we have is that the two MSS use the Direct or Monolingual Method.

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